

Animation offers alternative to bland morning cartoons

By Joe Bustillos
Daily Titan

Expanded Entertainment Los Angeles calls it the "21st International Tournee of Animation." I call it a sign that the Dark Ages of Animation might be passing.

Creative, imaginative, intelligent, original — the Tournee of Animation is a two-hour presentation of 14 short animated features from eight countries. In stark contrast to the unimaginative and blantly capitalistic Saturday morning fare usually offered in the name of animated entertainment, the Tournee of Animation employs a broad range of styles, subjects and media.

Media utilized range from traditional animation (of the classical Disney-Warner Bros. variety), to the intermingling of traditional animation and computer-generated figures, to the use of stop-action photography (i.e., the Claymation technique used in the popular California Raisins "Heard It Through the Grapevine" commercials).

But it isn't the media used or the new technologies employed that makes this presentation work. It works because this international host of animators has

taken the media and technologies and said something — simple artistic self-expression.

It's interesting to see some of the international elements of humor seen in "The Cat Came Back." "Quinoscopio" features rambling skits and skewered looks at various slices of life. Other shorts stretch the boundaries of reality by tightening or expanding the viewer's focus or by making visual associations that are unusual, as in "78 Tours." Some express sentiments of hope (the 1987 Academy Award Winner for Best Animated Short, "The Man Who Planted Trees"). "Living in a Mobile Home," a happy little ditty about the joys of life on the road, is another example.

But a negative aspect about the Tournee of Animation is that it isn't accessible to a larger audience. With the GoBots and G.I. Joe commanding the TV airwaves, the Dark Ages of Animation will continue to confuse the masses into thinking that cheap production values, simplistic or idiotic storylines and crass commercial ties are what animated entertainment is all about.

Those interested in turning back the Dark Ages of Animation can contact Expanded Entertainment at (213) 473-6701.



A scene from "Technological Threat" by Bill Kroyer as featured in The 21st International Tournee of Animation.